

# CCRC Currents

COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER

## Improving Community College Assessment and Placement

THOMAS BAILEY



Each year, tens of thousands of students arrive at community colleges to pursue the dream of a college education. These students face enormous odds: six years down the road, only 35 percent of them will have earned a degree or credential. The reasons for failure will be many: poor academic skills, competing family and job responsibilities, unfamiliarity with the requirements and expectations of college, lack of family and peer support, and the underdevelopment of personal qualities such as perseverance that contribute to academic success. For their part, the colleges try to take account of these problems when students enroll. Yet even when the set of problems is narrowed to the skills and knowledge that are essential for successfully engaging in college-level work, the process of assessment and placement that colleges use to sort students into college-level or developmental courses may not be very effective in helping students succeed.

The ACCUPLACER, the COMPASS, or a similar standardized test to assess cognitive skills in reading, writing, and math is used by most colleges as the sole determinant of whether students can enroll directly in college-level courses or are instead referred to developmental, or remedial, education. These exams may be the least known high-stakes tests in America. Most students arrive at community colleges unaware of them or the role they will play in shaping their college trajectory.

A growing number of studies from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) and elsewhere call into question the ultimate benefits of the process of assessment and placement into remediation. Sixty percent of incoming students are assigned to at least one remedial class, yet there is little evidence that remedial coursework does

very much to strengthen student outcomes, especially for students who score below, but relatively close to, the cutoff score for college-level courses. If students are not broadly benefiting from developmental education, part of the reason may be that colleges are not accurately identifying who needs help or what the most pressing needs faced by particular students really are.

In an effort to better understand this issue, researchers at CCRC have been conducting a number of studies on incoming student assessment policy and practice over the past year. Our research began with a review of the relevant literature (see *CCRC Working Paper No. 19*) and was followed by an eight-state scan of assessment policies and practices (final results forthcoming), validity studies of the COMPASS and the ACCUPLACER (see *CCRC Working Paper No. 41*; additional results forthcoming) and a close analysis of developmental policy and practice in one urban community college system (see *CCRC Working Paper No. 36*).

In our initial review of commonly used assessments, we found wide variation in the cutoff scores used to determine eligibility for college-level classes. This finding is not surprising; the statistical correlation between test scores and college performance increases in a gentle curve — there is no magic number above which students perform reliably well in college classes and below which they reliably fail. As a result, the cutoff scores set by community colleges remain more or less arbitrary. We also found that states and community college systems across the country are moving toward uniform cutoff scores and remedial requirements.

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In our review, we encountered a few small studies with tantalizing evidence that other measures might be better predictors of college readiness, but large-scale research on the subject was nonexistent. Our predictive validity studies were designed to fill this knowledge gap.

These studies — one of an urban community college system, led by Judith Scott-Clayton, and one of a state system, led by Clive Belfield — explore how well scores on the most common assessments used by community colleges predict success in college (this is referred to as predictive validity) and whether the inclusion of other measures might improve placement accuracy. The researchers conducted a number of analyses comparing the predictive validity of the standardized tests alone, high school grades alone, high school grades combined with other measures of prior performance and experience, and a combination of all of these factors.

The results of these analyses shed light on the inadequacies of current assessment instruments. In both studies, our researchers found that systems using assessment tests alone tended to underplace students; that is, they assigned students to developmental education who would otherwise have passed the first college-level course in the same subject area. (It is important to recognize that while the simulations that were carried out do predict the rate of under- and overplacement, they cannot identify in advance which individual students are likely to be underplaced or overplaced.) In the study of a large urban system, simulations suggest that 29 percent of the students who took English assessment tests and 18 percent of those who took math assessments were what Judith Scott-Clayton refers to as “severely underplaced.” These are students who were assigned to developmental education but who, according to our analysis, were predicted to have earned a B or better in the first relevant college-level course. We found similar results in the study of assessment in a state system. In both cases, a much lower percentage of those assessed were “severely overplaced,” that is, were assigned to college-level courses but failed them.

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The studies also suggest that a student’s high school GPA may contain more useful information than an assessment score alone. In the study of the state system, we found that high school GPA was strongly predictive of performance: Using it as the criterion for placement cut severe error rates in half. In the study of the urban system, GPA was not substantially superior in assessing college readiness, but it was slightly better than the standardized tests. In retrospect, it is not surprising that high school GPA contains more information than results on an academic assessment test since high school grades reflect a range of behaviors, social skills, and attitudes that a standardized test cannot capture.

What do these studies tell us? Most important, they demonstrate that college success depends on far more than the narrow range of skills measured by the most widely used assessments. Assessments may have an important role to play in understanding what students need, but we need to move away from a process that relies exclusively on current instruments to divide students into discrete “developmental” and “college-ready” groups. Combining assessments with GPA and other information or even using GPA alone for recent high school graduates may lead to more accurate placements. But a truly comprehensive solution requires more than the use of nuanced and informative assessments and broader information on students; it also requires reform of the structure and function of instructional services themselves, since better information will be meaningless if colleges do not have the means to make use of that information.

We need a more coherent system for determining and meeting students’ needs, but change may not come easily. In CCRC’s analysis of developmental policies and practice at one urban community college system, the researchers identified several sets of conflicting institutional goals that make it difficult to reform developmental education policies. These “opposing forces” consist of the push to establish uniform, system-wide standards versus individual colleges’ resistance to adopting policies they perceive as ineffective; colleges’

imperative to efficiently assess thousands of entering students versus the need for an effective, comprehensive means of assessment; and the pressure to increase student progression and completion while upholding academic standards.

These tensions may be difficult to reconcile; doing so certainly requires strong commitment from the college leadership and faculty. Nonetheless, the trend toward assessment standardization and centralization is in some cases going hand-in-hand with major curricular reforms at the state level. As states such as Virginia, North Carolina, and Texas revamp their remedial programs to help students gain the particular skills they need more quickly, they are developing new assessment tests that are more diagnostic than the ones previously used.

Other colleges are experimenting with alternative approaches to assessment, such as using multiple measures that take noncognitive characteristics into account or administering early assessments in high school. These are promising developments, and in the coming year, CCRC will be studying some of them to understand their impact. There is much work to be done in improving how community colleges deal with the large numbers of incoming students who arrive with a multiplicity of problems that affect their ability to thrive in the classroom; increasing the effectiveness of assessment practices will go a long way toward creating a system of academic support that helps these students succeed.

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In this newsletter, you will learn about our new and continuing research, upcoming conference presentations, and recent publications. Complete information about CCRC is available on our website, <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>, where you can also sign up to receive biweekly e-alerts and download our reports and briefs. We welcome your feedback.

## CCRC RESEARCH PROJECTS

Comprising both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the research conducted by CCRC is of national importance in promoting adequate preparation, increased access, and educational success for all students. Funded by foundations as well as federal and state agencies, we are currently involved in more than a dozen individual projects, outlined below.

### Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment

Funded by a five-year grant from the Department of Education's Institute of



Sciences, this new center (see p. 11), known as CAPSEE, conducts research on four key topics: (1) the effect of short-term occupational degrees on labor market outcomes; (2) the effect of non-credit workforce programs on workforce development; (3) the role of for-profit postsecondary institutions; and (4) the trajectory of employment earnings growth after college. It also evaluates initiatives designed to improve student outcomes, focusing on policies and programs that combine work and study, help students choose among educational pathways, and provide incentives to choose specific occupational programs. CAPSEE will conduct twelve distinct research projects using data from five partner states: Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia. The center is led by CCRC and is operated in collaboration with scholars at the University of Michigan, Harvard, Stanford, the City University of New York, the University of North Carolina, and New Horizons Economic Research.

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Download CAPSEE reports and sign up for email updates at <http://capseecenter.org>.



## Postsecondary Success Initiative

The goal of this initiative, launched in 2008 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is to double the number of low-income students who by age 26 earn a postsecondary degree or credential. CCRC is working to identify the most productive investments in community colleges by examining the effectiveness of several promising but largely untested strategies for promoting student success among disadvantaged young adults. The following studies are funded by the Gates Foundation; the three Virginia studies received additional support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

## Multiple-State Assessment Scan

This qualitative study of developmental assessment and placement in eight states seeks to understand the goals and rationales of such policies and practices for incoming students, the influence of the policies on institutional practices, evidence about effectiveness in promoting student success, and insights into innovative approaches. Two reports will be made available in 2012.

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## Developmental Assessment, Placement, Programming, and Outcomes at CUNY

This study uses student record data from all six City University of New York (CUNY) community colleges to examine developmental assessment and placement policies, programmatic interventions, and the impact of each on students, particularly low-income young adults. The first report in this series was released in November 2011, with additional reports to follow in 2012.

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*Related publication:*

- Jaggars, S. S., & Hodara, M. (2011). *The opposing forces that shape developmental education: Assessment, placement, and progression at CUNY community colleges*. CCRC Working Paper No. 36. (See p. 18.)

## Accelerated Developmental Education Models

CCRC is conducting mixed-methods studies of two accelerated developmental education programs: FastStart at the Community College of Denver and the accelerated English program at Chabot College in California. Previous CCRC

research of another model at the Community College of Baltimore County suggests that such programs offer underprepared students a more expeditious route to and through introductory college-level courses. Reports will be made available in 2012.

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*Related publication:*

- Jenkins, D., et al. (2010). *A model for accelerating academic success of community college remedial English students: Is the Accelerated Learning Program effective and affordable?* CCRC Working Paper No. 21.

## Washington State's I-BEST Program

CCRC is evaluating the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program model, which is designed to speed the transition to college and careers for adult basic skills students by pairing basic skills and career-technical instructors in the classroom so that students gain basic and occupational skills simultaneously. CCRC has conducted in-depth field research to examine how the model works. Quantitative analysis suggests that the program substantially increases the rate at which adult basic skills students earn college credits and complete postsecondary occupational credentials. CCRC is also examining whether the positive effects of the program are worth the costs.

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*Related publications:*

- Wachen, J., Jenkins, D., & Van Noy, M. (2011). Integrating basic skills and career-technical instruction: Findings from a field study of Washington State's I-BEST model. *Community College Review*, 39(2), 136–159.
- Zeidenberg, M., Cho, S. W., & Jenkins, D. (2010). *Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST): New evidence of effectiveness*. CCRC Working Paper No. 20.

## Structure of Effective Occupational Programs in Washington State

This study examines the structure and supports provided by occupational programs that are effective in enabling low-income young adults to complete credentials and obtain employment. CCRC is using unit record data on students in the state's community and technical colleges to chart the pathways of low-income students through community college occupational programs, to



compare the performance of programs in the same field across colleges, and to identify sites for field research.

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*Related publications:*

- Jenkins, D., & Weiss, M. J. (2011). *Charting pathways to completion for low-income community college students*. CCRC Working Paper No. 34. (See p. 19.)
- Scott-Clayton, J., & Weiss, M. J. (2011). *Institutional variation in credential completion: Evidence from Washington State community and technical colleges*. CCRC Working Paper No. 33. (See p. 19).

### Student Success Courses in Virginia

These courses provide new students with information about the college they attend, assistance in academic and career planning, and an introduction to techniques for improving study habits and other personal skills. This study examines student outcomes from course participation. It also examines the policies, practices, and implementation challenges at three colleges in Virginia using qualitative methods.

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publications:*

- Cho, S. W., & Karp, M. M. (2012). *Student success courses and educational outcomes at Virginia community colleges*. CCRC Working Paper No. 40. (See p. 17.)
- O’Gara, L., Karp, M. M., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). Student success courses in the community college: An exploratory study of student perspectives. *Community College Review*, 36(3), 195–218.

### Gatekeeper Course Success in Virginia

Based on data collected at seven colleges, this qualitative study explores factors affecting students’ patterns of progression from developmental education through introductory college-level or “gatekeeper” math and English courses. A previous CCRC quantitative study found substantial variation among Virginia community colleges in the rates at which students enrolled in and passed developmental and gatekeeper courses.

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publications:*

- Edgecombe, N. (forthcoming). *Pedagogy in the community college: An examination of developmental and college-level classrooms*. CCRC Working Paper.
- Jenkins, D., Jaggars, S. S., & Roksa, J. (2009). *Promoting gatekeeper course success among community college students needing remediation: Findings and recommendations from a Virginia study*. CCRC Report.

### Online Courses in Virginia

This qualitative study builds on quantitative analyses showing that students perform more poorly in online courses than in face-to-face courses. Interviews with online students, faculty, and support staff at two community colleges, as well as observations of online courses, were completed in spring of 2011. Analysis of these data is currently underway.

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*Related publication:*

- Xu, D., & Jaggars, S. S. (2011). The effectiveness of distance education across Virginia’s community colleges: Evidence from introductory college-level math and English courses. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(3), 360–377.

### Assessment of Evidence Series

Each paper in this series synthesizes evidence from the existing research literature to draw conclusions on a particular topic and to provide concrete, evidence-based recommendations to practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. The first eight reports (on developmental assessment and placement, developmental acceleration, developmental mathematics pedagogy, contextualization of basic skills instruction, online learning, non-academic support, institutional and program structure, and organizational improvement) were released in the spring of 2011. A ninth report, focused on guidance and counseling, is currently under development.

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*Related publication:*

- Bailey, T., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2011). *Introduction to the CCRC Assessment of Evidence Series*. CCRC Publication.

## Washington State's Student Achievement Initiative

In collaboration with the Institute for Higher Education Leadership (IHELP), CCRC is leading a three-year evaluation of the Washington Student Achievement Initiative (SAI), an innovative policy that uses intermediate performance measures and incentive funding to encourage Washington State's community and technical colleges to adopt practices that increase rates of student progression and completion. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the study is designed to assess how and to what extent the SAI model encourages colleges to work to improve student outcomes. CCRC and IHELP are writing policy briefs examining lessons from the Washington State experience for policymakers seeking to implement performance funding in other states.

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*Related publication:*

- Shulock, N., & Jenkins, D. (2011). *Performance incentives to improve community college completion: Learning from Washington State's Student Achievement Initiative (A state policy brief)*. CCRC & IHELP Publication. (See p. 19.)

## Implementation and Impacts of Performance Funding in Three States

This study, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, examines how different kinds of state performance funding programs have been implemented in three states — Florida, Ohio, and Tennessee. It analyzes what steps have been taken to implement these programs, their impacts on institutional practices and student outcomes, the main obstacles and unintended impacts that the programs have encountered, the means that the programs have adopted to monitor and address these obstacles and unintended impacts, and the effectiveness of these countermeasures.

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publication:*

- Dougherty, K. J., & Reddy, V. (2011). *The impacts of state performance funding systems on higher education institutions: Research literature review and policy recommendations*. CCRC Working Paper No. 37. (See p. 18.)

## Completion by Design Initiative

CCRC is a national technical assistance team partner organization in this Gates Foundation-funded project, which is working with colleges in four states to substantially increase completion rates while holding down costs and maintaining access and quality. In collaboration with JBL Associates and the RP Group of California, CCRC is helping to build the capacity of participating colleges to conduct analyses of student pathways, use the results to redesign policies and practices in ways that increase student completion rates, and analyze the costs and efficiency effects of such reforms. Using student unit record data provided by participating colleges, CCRC is developing data analytics and tools for use by the Completion by Design (CBD) institutions and community colleges more generally to monitor and identify ways to accelerate student progression and completion.

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publications:*

- Belfield, C. (forthcoming). *Measuring community college cost efficiency*. CCRC Working Paper.
- Jenkins, D., & Cho, S. W. (2012). *Get with the program: Accelerating community college students' entry into and completion of programs of study*. CCRC Working Paper No. 32. (See p. 17.)
- Zeidenberg, M., & Scott, M. (2011). *The content of their coursework: Understanding course-taking patterns at community colleges by clustering student transcripts*. CCRC Working Paper No. 35. (See p. 18.)

## Concurrent Courses Initiative in California

Launched in 2008 by the James Irvine Foundation, this three-year initiative sought to demonstrate the feasibility of dual enrollment programs to enhance college and career pathways for low-income and other students who are typically underserved by such programs. CCRC has studied implementation and program impacts at all eight of the participating secondary–postsecondary partnerships. Results from quantitative analyses of student outcomes suggest some positive effects. A report on findings is planned for release in late spring 2012. For more information, visit [www.concurrentcourses.org](http://www.concurrentcourses.org).

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publications:*

- Edwards, L., Hughes, K. L., & Weisberg, A. (2011). *Different approaches to dual enrollment: Understanding program features and their implications*. San Francisco, CA: The James Irvine Foundation. (See p. 18.)
- Hughes, K. L., & Edwards, L. (forthcoming). Teaching and learning in the dual enrollment classroom. *New Directions for Higher Education*.

## Streamlining the Student Experience at Macomb Community College

In collaboration with Macomb Community College, CCRC is working to (1) identify complexities in the institutional system that create confusion or pose other challenges to Macomb students, (2) develop recommendations to simplify those systems or otherwise ameliorate their impact on the student experience, and (3) implement and test the effectiveness of changes in institutional policy and process. This project is funded by the Kresge Foundation.

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## Evaluation of Community College Reforms in Tennessee

CCRC is partnering with JBL Associates to conduct a formative evaluation of a Lumina Foundation for Education-funded project operated by the Tennessee Board of Regents. The project has two objectives: (1) to promote the development of more highly structured programs in Tennessee community colleges, and (2) to strengthen connections between the state's community colleges and adult career centers.

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## Achieving the Dream

This national nonprofit, dedicated to helping more community college students succeed, supports a network of 160 educational institutions in 30 states and emphasizes the use of data to inform change. In collaboration with MDRC, and with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education, CCRC is evaluating the "culture of evidence" model of institutional improvement that is being tested by the organization's participating colleges. CCRC is leading the evaluation of the Washington

State Achieving the Dream colleges. With funding from College Spark Washington, CCRC and MDRC are conducting a survey in two waves about the use of data for improving student outcomes by faculty, administrators, and student services staff at these institutions.

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publication:*

- Rutschow, E. Z., et al. (2011). *Turning the tide: Five years of Achieving the Dream in community colleges*. MDRC and CCRC Report.

## Developmental Education Initiative

As part of their Achieving the Dream efforts (see above), several participating colleges piloted small-scale developmental education reforms with promising results. Fifteen such colleges were selected to participate in the Developmental Education Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education, with the goal of expanding innovative strategies to a large scale across a three-year period. CCRC is working with MDRC in its evaluation of the initiative.

*Lead contact:*

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*Related publication:*

- Quint, J., et al. (2011). *Scaling up is hard to do: Progress and challenges during the first year of the Achieving the Dream Developmental Education Initiative*. MDRC Report.

## Scaling Innovation

This research and implementation project, funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation,

**SCALING  
INNOVATION**

examines how instructional innovation in developmental education can enhance students' learning and persistence. CCRC has partnered with colleges experienced in developing and scaling promising developmental education instructional reforms. As faculty and administrators at these colleges work with replicating colleges to adapt these innovations to new contexts, CCRC is assessing the replication process and the impact of the reforms on student success. For more information, visit [www.scalinginnovation.org](http://www.scalinginnovation.org).

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*Related publication:*

- Doing developmental education differently. (2012). *Inside Out*, Vol. 1, Issue 1. Scaling Innovation/CCRC Publication.

### **Automotive Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative**

Known as AMTEC and led by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), this National Science Foundation–funded National Center of Excellence is a consortium of community colleges and industry partners that seek to better prepare highly skilled technicians for work in automobile manufacturing and technology. CCRC serves as an evaluation partner, providing data and findings from surveys, interviews, site visits, and college records that support program development.

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### **Federal Work Study**

Funded by the Spencer Foundation, this research examines the consequences of student employment. Using administrative data from West Virginia, supplemented with national contextual information from the Beginning Postsecondary Student database, it provides a direct, quasi-experimental examination of the consequences of Federal Work Study on student achievement, persistence, and completion. This project concluded in December 2011.

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*Related publications:*

- Scott-Clayton, J. (2011). The causal effect of federal work-study participation: Quasi-experimental evidence from West Virginia. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(4), 506–527.
- Scott-Clayton, J. (2012). What explains trends in labor supply among U.S. undergraduates? *National Tax Journal*, 65(1), 181–210. Also available as NBER Working Paper No. 17744. (See p. 17.)

## **NATIONAL CENTER FOR POSTSECONDARY RESEARCH**

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For more than five years, the National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR) has focused on measuring the effectiveness of programs designed to help students make the transition to college and master basic skills needed to advance to a degree. While colleges employ multiple programs and policies designed to teach students the skills they need to succeed, there is little definitive research on the effects of some widely used practices. NCPR employs rigorous research methodologies, including random assignment experimental design, to evaluate such practices. The center was established in 2006 through a grant (R305A060010) from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. NCPR is led by CCRC and is operated with partners MDRC, the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, and faculty from Harvard University.

NCPR's major studies on developmental summer bridge programs, learning communities, and dual enrollment programs, all described below, are now in their final stages. Interim findings for these studies are available in working papers and reports that can be downloaded from the NCPR website or from ERIC (the online education research library sponsored by IES). Final results will be made available in the coming months. NCPR will complete its portfolio of research in June 2012 with a culminating conference in New York City (see box).

### **Developmental Summer Bridge (DSB) Programs (Texas)**

These programs are designed to reduce or eliminate the need for developmental education among recent high school graduates. Students with weak academic skills in math or English are offered the opportunity to participate in an intensive, accelerated program during the summer before they begin college. DSB programs are designed to build students' skills and to increase their knowledge of and comfort with the college environment. Such programs are administered by numerous colleges and universities in the state of Texas and have been encouraged and sometimes funded by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), a partner in NCPR's ongoing research.



In the summer of 2009, eight Texas colleges collaborated with NCPR and the THECB to study the effectiveness of their DSB programs. The study used a random assignment evaluation design; those who applied for admission were selected either for the programs or for the control group. All agreed to share their college records with NCPR, allowing researchers to determine whether students who enroll in the programs do better in college subsequently than those who do not. Student outcomes were tracked through the spring of 2011.

Early findings from the research suggest that the summer bridge programs did not have an impact on college enrollment rates or persistence. However, there is evidence that program students were more likely to pass college-level courses in math and writing in the fall semester following the summer program. The findings also suggest that program students were more likely to attempt higher level reading, writing, and math courses compared with control group students. The first report for this project describes how these programs were developed, designed, and implemented, and it provides preliminary results on student outcomes. A full report on the results of this project will become available in spring 2012. Houston Endowment also contributed support for this project.

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*Related publication:*

- Wathington, H. D., et al. (2011). *Getting ready for college: An implementation and early impacts study of eight Texas developmental summer bridge programs*. NCPR Report. (See p. 19.)

### College Readiness Partnerships (Texas)

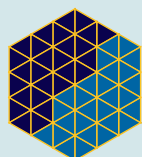
NCPR also undertook another project in Texas to better understand the ways that colleges and high schools work together to improve students' college readiness. Researchers visited colleges and high schools in Dallas and Houston and reviewed websites of relevant initiatives throughout Texas. The final report of this project describes and classifies the range of college-connected programs and strategies available to help underprepared high school students become college ready. This project builds on the DSB research described above and is funded by IES and Houston Endowment. The project's findings have been used to initiate new research on Virginia's university-designed Capstone Courses in math and English, designed to better prepare high school students for college.

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*Related publication:*

- Barnett, E. A., et al. (forthcoming). *Preparing high school students for college: An exploratory study of college readiness partnership programs in Texas*. NCPR Report.



National Center for Postsecondary Research  
[www.PostsecondaryResearch.org](http://www.PostsecondaryResearch.org)

## 2012 Conference on Developmental Education

On June 21–22, 2012, at Teachers College, Columbia University, NCPR will host a culminating conference titled *Strengthening Developmental Education: What Have We Learned, and What's Next?* The gathering will feature national experts and will focus on innovative efforts aimed at improving the skills of academically underprepared students. The results of several NCPR studies will be presented.

In four main sessions, the conference will introduce the central challenges associated with developmental education, review existing research, and examine new policies and practices from around the country. Each of the substantive sessions will be followed by focused breakout discussions, pairing a researcher and practitioner to reflect on the implementation and effectiveness of particular reforms. A program for the event and registration information will soon be made available on the NCPR website.

## Learning Communities

Led by researchers from MDRC, NCPR is evaluating learning communities, in which groups of students enroll together in two or more courses. The evaluation is being conducted at six community colleges around the country, with some colleges' programs focused on developmental math, others focused on developmental English or reading, and one with a career focus. These courses are linked with student success courses, other developmental courses, or college content courses in different configurations across the sites.

Study intake began in mid-2007 and was completed in September 2009. The participating colleges have operated 161 learning communities over the course of the project, and nearly 7,000 students have been randomly assigned. Transcript-level data are being used to evaluate the impact of assigning students to a learning community, examining a number of outcome measures that include progress through developmental education, credit accumulation, and persistence. Evaluation findings from all six colleges have been released, the most recent of which are from Merced College in California and the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). Each of these colleges developed learning communities designed to boost the academic success of their developmental English students.

At Merced, learning communities linked developmental English courses with a variety of other courses at the developmental and college levels. At CCBC, learning communities linked developmental English with a range of college-level courses and a weekly one-hour Master Learner session designed to support curricular integration and student learning. Both Merced and CCBC implemented relatively advanced learning communities. A strong cohort experience was provided to students, and other aspects of the learning communities model were implemented with variation at each college. On average, the colleges succeeded in providing program group students with an experience that was substantially different from the experience of their control group counterparts.

At Merced, learning communities students attempted and earned significantly more developmental English credits than students in the control group during the program semester. At the end of the subsequent semester, they had passed significantly more English courses than their control

group counterparts. At CCBC, there were no meaningful impacts on students' credit attempts or progress in developmental English. On average, neither college's learning communities program had an impact on college registration in the post-program semester, or on cumulative credits earned.

Findings from the Learning Communities Demonstration generally show that when one-semester learning communities have impacts, they tend to be concentrated in the semester in which students are enrolled in the program. The evidence to date suggests that one-semester learning communities programs by themselves are typically not sufficient to boost reenrollment or increase credit accumulation. In 2012 NCPR will release a final report that synthesizes the findings across all of the colleges studied and includes an additional semester of student follow-up at each college.

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Thomas Brock, [thomas.brock@mdrc.org](mailto:thomas.brock@mdrc.org)

### Related publications:

- Visher, M. G., Teres, J., & Richman, P. (2011). *Breaking new ground: An impact study of career-focused learning communities at Kingsborough Community College*. NCPR Report.
- Weissman, E., et al. (2012). *Learning communities for students in developmental English: Impact studies at Merced College and the Community College of Baltimore County*. NCPR Report.

## Career-Focused Dual Enrollment (California)

CCRC has for some time carried out research on dual enrollment programs, which enable high school students to enroll in college courses and earn college credits. While such programs were once limited to high-achieving, academically focused students, today many educators and policymakers view dual enrollment as a strategy to help a wider range of students, including career and technical education students, make the transition from high school to college.

To further strengthen the research base on dual enrollment, IES is, through NCPR, providing partial funding for the evaluation of the Concurrent Courses Initiative (CCI). Funded by the James Irvine Foundation and managed by CCRC, this initiative supported eight secondary-postsecondary partnerships in California in developing, enhancing, and expanding career-focused dual enrollment programs, particularly for low-income or underrepresented youth (see p. 6).

Students participating in the initiative were tracked and their outcomes compared with those of other students in their high school districts, with statistical controls. Preliminary results for the first cohort of students, those who participated while they were twelfth-graders in 2008–09, show that CCI participants were moderately more likely to attend college, and to attend a four-year college, than the comparison students. Participants also had accumulated approximately one more credit per term than their district peers. Analyses of fall-to-spring college persistence did not yield any significant effects. Longer follow-up of the first cohort of students and results for the second cohort will be completed this spring.

*Lead contact:*

Katherine Hughes, [hughes@tc.edu](mailto:hughes@tc.edu)

### State Data Analysis on Dual Enrollment

NCPR recently conducted two large-scale statistical studies of dual enrollment using state unit record data from Florida. The first study, which tracked two cohorts of high school seniors from across the state, found that students who participated in dual enrollment (DE) were more likely to go to college and earn a bachelor's degree than similar students who did not participate. However, these positive associations were driven entirely by dual enrollment classes taken on college campuses. Students who took dual enrollment classes exclusively on the high school campus showed no statistically significant gains. The study also compared the apparent influence of Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment courses on college outcomes and found that DE and AP participation were both strongly associated with positive outcomes.

Using data from two high school cohorts in selected Florida districts, the second study employed a quasi-experimental regression-discontinuity design and found no evidence that simply taking a dual enrollment course improved outcomes among students whose high school GPA placed them at the margin of participation eligibility for dual enrollment. However, for students on the margin of participation eligibility for college algebra, it found that taking such a challenging dual enrollment course had large and significant positive effects on college enrollment and graduation rates. The findings suggest that, at least for some students, the benefits of dual enrollment are driven by the type of course they take.

*Lead contact:*

Cecilia Speroni, [cs2456@columbia.edu](mailto:cs2456@columbia.edu)

*Related publications:*

- Speroni, C. (2011). *High school dual enrollment programs: Are we fast-tracking students too fast?* NCPR Working Paper. (See p. 18.)
- Speroni, C. (2011). *Determinants of students' success: The role of Advanced Placement and dual enrollment programs.* NCPR Working Paper. (See p. 18.)

Download NCPR reports and sign up for email updates at [www.postsecondaryresearch.org](http://www.postsecondaryresearch.org).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Partners Launch New Center on Postsecondary Education and Employment

On October 4, 2011, 40 state higher education officials and researchers from across the nation gathered at Teachers College, Columbia University, to attend the inaugural meeting of the federally funded Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment (CAPSEE). Led by CCRC director Thomas Bailey, CAPSEE's core research agenda (see also p. 3) is to determine how well a variety of postsecondary pathways — short-term occupational degrees, non-credit workforce programs, and associate and bachelor's degrees in an array of subjects — prepare students for the workforce.

At the meeting, state representatives expressed their concern at the growing number of residents living in poverty in their states. State and federal officials are looking to community colleges to provide at least a partial solution to unemployment and low-wage jobs. However, because college and employment data are often incompatible and difficult to access, labor market outcomes for many students remain poorly understood. CAPSEE researchers, working in close collaboration with five states (Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia), will link data from hundreds of thousands of students in order to shed light on the relationship between education and employment outcomes. "With these very large state datasets, we can look at the relationship between



different programs or majors or degrees with employment on a much more detailed level,” said Bailey. “And we hope that as we go forward and show the usefulness of the data, we can build a constituency for routinizing their use and availability on a national level.”

CAPSEE will also examine the for-profit sector and evaluate a series of initiatives designed to improve student outcomes, focusing on policies that combine work and study, help students choose among educational pathways, and provide incentives to choose specific occupational programs. In addition, the new center will engage in national leadership activities, including the hosting of workshops for scholars on how to conduct research using longitudinal statewide data linked to institutional data.

The center is funded by a five-year, \$9.95 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. It functions as a partnership between the five states and researchers from CCRC, the University of Michigan, Harvard University, Stanford University, the City University of New York, the University of North Carolina, and New Horizons Economic Research. For more information on CAPSEE, visit <http://capseecenter.org>.

### **Committee on Measures of Student Success Issues Report**

In December 2011, a committee appointed by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and chaired by CCRC director Thomas Bailey submitted a report urging the federal government to

make major changes in how it tracks community college success and productivity. The 15-member Committee on Measures of Student Success was created in the wake of the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which required that two-year colleges report their completion rates to the federal government. College officials pushed for the inclusion of more comprehensive measures of student success, arguing that the required measures alone did not accurately reflect the achievements of the populations they served.

The committee, which spent a year studying how best to evaluate success in two-year colleges, recommends several alternative measures and changes in data collection to yield a more nuanced depiction of how well these institutions are achieving their mission. The report urges the Department of Education to include students who transfer to four-year colleges without degrees as well as those who earn community college credentials in their calculation of completion rates. It also recommends that colleges report completion rates for distinct student cohorts, including part-time students, students who require remediation, and students receiving financial aid.

The report also proposes that employment and learning outcomes be included as additional measures of college success. It suggests that the Department of Education provide incentives to states and colleges to improve access to student earnings data and that colleges make public the measures of student learning that they already report to accreditors or other agencies. Finally, the report urges the creation of a federal unit-record



*Researchers and state higher education officials gathered at Teachers College, Columbia University, for CAPSEE's kickoff meeting.*



database that would link student data from state to state and from college to careers, in order to make it easier for colleges and lawmakers to track long-term outcomes for two-year college students.

Bailey described the report as the midpoint of a long road. “Our recommendations represent a significant improvement over the current system, but more work is needed to improve the accuracy and usefulness of student success measures,” he said.

The Education Department has stated that it will create a plan based on the committee’s recommendations in 2012. To read the report, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acmss.html>.



From left to right: Archie Cubarrubia (designated federal official for the Committee on Measures of Student Success), Thomas Bailey (CCRC director and committee chair), Arne Duncan (U.S. Secretary of Education), and Jack Buckley (Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics).

## Community College Virtual Symposium

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), the Community College Virtual Symposium took place on April 27, 2011. The symposium — the culmination of a series of events that began with the October 2010 White House Summit on Community College — provided an opportunity for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to discuss community college issues. CCRC’s Thomas Bailey, Katherine Hughes, and Shanna Smith Jaggars were panelists at the event.

Bailey, Hughes, and Jaggars also contributed to a series of briefs released by the Department of Education in January 2012. The briefs extend the conversations that took place at the virtual symposium, providing information on the following top-

ics: bridge programs for low-skill adults, secondary–postsecondary alignment, developmental assessment and placement, and partnerships between community colleges and employers. Briefs can be downloaded from the Department of Education website at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/meetings.html>.



From left to right: Martha Kanter (Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education) and panelists Judy Alamprese (principal associate, Abt Associates), Katherine Hughes (assistant director, CCRC), and Marcie Foster (policy analyst, CLASP).

## CCRC Researcher Earns Doctorate



Cecilia Speroni defended her PhD dissertation in the Economics and Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University, in April 2011. Her dissertation, *Essays on the Economics of High School-to-College Transition Programs and Teacher Effectiveness*, examines the role of high school acceleration mechanisms in contributing to student success, extends regression-discontinuity methods to evaluate the causal effect of dual enrollment programs, and assesses the predictive power of subjective and objective evaluations of teachers’ effectiveness at raising students’ test scores. Speroni was a CCRC staff member from 2007 to 2011 and is now a researcher at Mathematica Policy Research. Her research interests include the evaluation of educational policies, the measurement of teacher performance, and issues of postsecondary access and attainment.

## UPCOMING CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

### League for Innovation in the Community College 15th Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania March 4–7, 2012

#### Preparing for Online Courses: How to Improve Student Readiness Activities

Monday, March 5, 2012, 8:00–9:00 AM  
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 3, 309/310

*Session Participants:*

Rachel Hare Bork, Research Associate, CCRC  
Ghazala Hashmi, Coordinator, Quality Enhancement Plan,  
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
Meg Foster, Assistant Coordinator, Quality Enhancement  
Plan, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

#### Weighing the Evidence: Considering Three Approaches that Improve Students' Skills

Monday, March 5, 2012, 12:30–1:30 PM  
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 4, 407

*Session Participants:*

Elisabeth A. Barnett, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Thomas Brock, Director, Young Adults and Postsecondary  
Education Policy Area, MDRC  
Donna McKusick, Dean, Developmental Education and  
Special Academic Programs, The Community College  
of Baltimore County  
Christine Timmerman, Director, Outreach and Retention,  
Lone Star College–CyFair

#### Optimizing Transfer Through Student Success Courses

Monday, March 5, 2012, 2:30–3:30 PM  
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 5, Grand Ballroom I

*Session Participants:*

Zawadi Rucks Ahidiana, Research Associate, CCRC  
Alexis Ehrhardt, Transition Counselor and SDV 100  
Coordinator, Danville Community College

#### Scaling Innovation in Developmental Math: Lessons from Research and Practice

Monday, March 5, 2012, 2:30–3:30 PM  
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 5, Grand Ballroom D

*Session Participants:*

Nikki Edgecombe, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Susan Bickerstaff, Postdoctoral Research Associate, CCRC  
Barbara Lontz, Assistant Professor, Mathematics,  
Montgomery County Community College

#### Enhancing Online Course Quality Through Multi-Media and Interactive Technology

Tuesday, March 6, 2012, 11:00 AM–12:00 PM  
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 3, 309/310

*Session Participants:*

Melissa Barragan, Senior Research Assistant, CCRC  
Di Xu, Senior Research Assistant, CCRC  
Jason Vance, Blackboard Admin/E-Learning Specialist,  
Thomas Nelson Community College

### Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness

Washington, DC  
March 8–10, 2012

#### Hitting the Ground Running? Strengthening the Initial Experiences of Community College Students

Thursday, March 8, 2012, 3:30–5:30 PM  
Location TBA

*Session Participants:*

Thomas Bailey, Director, CCRC  
Heather Wathington, Assistant Professor, Curry School of  
Education, University of Virginia  
Clive Belfield, Associate Professor, Queens College, City  
University of New York; and Research Affiliate, CCRC  
Thomas Brock, Director, Young Adults and Postsecondary  
Education Policy Area, MDRC

### Association for Education Finance and Policy

37th Annual Conference,  
Boston, Massachusetts  
March 15–17, 2012

#### Evaluations of Developmental Education and ESL at Community Colleges

Thursday, March 15, 2012, 4:30–6:00 PM  
Hyatt Regency Boston, 4th Floor, Adrienne Salon

*Session Participants:*

Thomas Bailey, Director, CCRC  
Judith Scott-Clayton, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Olga Rodriguez, Research Associate, CCRC  
Tatiana Melguizo, Assistant Professor in Higher Education,  
University of Southern California  
Angela Boatman, Doctoral Candidate, Harvard Graduate  
School of Education  
Michelle Hodara, Research Associate, CCRC

*Please visit*

**CCRC/NCPR/CAPSEE  
Booth #114**

*at the*

**15th Annual Innovations Conference  
March 4–7, 2012  
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown**

**The Effects of Part-Time Adjunct Instructors in Community Colleges: Addressing Selection Bias Using Instrumental Variable Strategy**

Thursday, March 15, 2012, 4:30–6:00 PM

Hyatt Regency Boston, 3rd Floor, Martha's Vineyard (Back)

*Session Participant:*

Di Xu, Senior Research Assistant, CCRC

**Do High-Stakes Placement Exams Predict College Success?**

Friday, March 16, 2012, 8:30–10:00 AM

Hyatt Regency Boston, 3rd Floor, Martha's Vineyard (Front)

*Session Participant:*

Judith Scott-Clayton, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

**Assistance or Obstacle? The Impact of Different Levels of English Remediation on Underprepared Students in Community Colleges**

Friday, March 16, 2012, 8:30–10:00 AM

Hyatt Regency Boston, 4th Floor, Marlborough

*Session Participant:*

Di Xu, Senior Research Assistant, CCRC

**The Validity of Placement Tests: Evidence from a State-Wide Community College System**

Saturday, March 17, 2012, 9:45–11:15 AM

Hyatt Regency Boston, 4th Floor, Adrienne Salon

*Session Participant:*

Clive Belfield, Associate Professor, Queens College, City University of New York; and Research Affiliate, CCRC

**The Labor Market Value of Community College Credentials**

Saturday, March 17, 2012, 11:30 AM–1:00 PM

Hyatt Regency Boston, 4th Floor, Sturbridge

*Session Participants:*

Mina Dadgar, Research Associate, CCRC

Madeline Joy Weiss, Database Programmer, CCRC

**Datatel Users' Group Conference  
National Harbor, Maryland  
April 1–4, 2012**

**Academic Self-Advising: CCRC Findings on How to Improve Student Success**

Monday, April 2, 2012, 5:10–6:00 PM

Gaylord National Resort, Chesapeake 1-3

*Session Participant:*

Shanna Smith Jaggars, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

**American Educational  
Research Association**

**2012 Annual Meeting,  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
April 13–17, 2012**

**Two Worlds of State Performance Accountability**

Friday, April 13, 2012, 2:15–3:45 PM

Vancouver Convention Center East, Room 14

*Session Participants:*

Kevin J. Dougherty, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

Vikash Reddy, Senior Research Assistant, CCRC

Rebecca S. Natow, Research Associate, CCRC

**Bridging College and Careers: Using Dual Enrollment to Enhance Career and Technical Education Pathways**

Sunday, April 15, 2012, 8:15–9:45 AM

Vancouver Convention Center West, Room 208 & 209

*Session Participants:*

Katherine Hughes, Assistant Director, CCRC

Olga Rodriguez, Research Associate, CCRC

**Accelerating Community College Students' Progression Through Developmental Education: Does It Work?**

Sunday, April 15, 2012, 12:25–1:55 PM

Vancouver Convention Center West, Room 306

*Session Participants:*

Shanna Smith Jaggars, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

Michelle Hodara, Research Associate, CCRC

**The Effects of Developmental Education and ESL on Language Minority Community College Students**

Sunday, April 15, 2012, 2:15–3:45 PM

Vancouver Convention Center West, Room 224

*Session Participant:*

Michelle Hodara, Research Associate, CCRC

**Assessment and Placement for Incoming Community College Students: Developments & Innovations in 8 Different States**

Monday, April 16, 2012, 12:25–1:55 PM

Vancouver Convention Center West, Room 206

*Session Participants:*

Katherine Hughes, Assistant Director, CCRC

Michelle Hodara, Research Associate, CCRC

**Unpacking Online Outcomes: Applying Research to Improve the Online Community College Learning Experience**

Monday, April 16, 2012, 4:05–5:35 PM

Pan Pacific, Oceanview 7& 8

*Session Participants:*

Nikki Edgecombe, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

Shanna Smith Jaggars, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

Rachel Hare Bork, Research Associate, CCRC

Zawadi Rucks Ahidiana, Research Associate, CCRC

Di Xu, Senior Research Assistant, CCRC

Barbara Means, Co-Director, Center of Technology in Learning, SRI International

**The Policy Diffusion Process for State Performance Funding for Higher Education**

Tuesday, April 17, 2012, 2:15–3:45 PM

Vancouver Convention Center East, Ballroom A

*Session Participants:*

Kevin J. Dougherty, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

Elizabeth Puleio, Assistant Director of Admissions, Teachers College, Columbia University

Please check CCRC's website for conference details and updates: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>.

**Council for the Study of  
Community Colleges  
54th Annual Conference,  
Orlando, Florida  
April 19–21, 2012**

**Navigating the Maze: Charting Pathways to  
Completion for Community College Students**

Time & Date TBA

Orlando World Center Marriott, Room TBA

*Session Participants:*

Matthew Zeidenberg, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Shanna Smith Jaggars, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Sung-Woo Cho, Research Associate, CCRC

**Increasing Students' Chances of College Success:  
High School–College Partnerships and College  
Readiness**

Time & Date TBA

Orlando Marriott World Center Resort and Convention Center,  
Room TBA

*Session Participants:*

Elisabeth A. Barnett, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Joshua Pretlow, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University  
of Virginia

**Teaching Academically Underprepared Students**

Time & Date TBA

Orlando World Center Marriott, Room TBA

*Session Participant:*

Dolores Perin, Senior Research Associate, CCRC

**American Association of  
Community Colleges  
92nd Annual Convention,  
Orlando, Florida  
April 21–24, 2012**

**Keeping the End in Mind: Examining Completers'  
Course-Taking to Improve Advising and Program  
Design**

Sunday, April 22, 2012, 2:30–3:30 PM

Orlando World Center Marriott, Canary Ballroom 1

*Session Participants:*

Matthew Zeidenberg, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Karen A. Stout, President, Montgomery County  
Community College

**Tweaking the Process: Reducing Institutional  
Complexity to Increase Student Success**

Monday, April 23, 2012, 9:15–10:15AM

Orlando World Center Marriott, Grand Ballroom 10

*Session Participants:*

Shanna Smith Jaggars, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
James Jacobs, President, Macomb Community College  
Jill Little, Vice President, Student Services, Macomb  
Community College  
Mary Frega, Project Manager, Macomb Community  
College

**Can We Significantly Raise Completion Rates? The  
Completion by Design Approach**

Monday, April 23, 2012, 2:45–3:45 PM

Orlando World Center Marriott, Crystal Ballroom, Salon F

*Session Participants:*

Nan Poppe, Executive Director, Completion by Design  
Assistance Team

Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Associate, CCRC  
Lenore Rodicio, Executive Director, MDC<sup>3</sup> Student Success  
and Completion Initiatives, Miami Dade College

*Join our researchers, staff,  
and affiliates at the*

**CCRC/NCPR**

**Open Reception**

*at the*

**92nd Annual AACC Convention**

**Sunday, April 22, 2012**

**7:00 – 9:00 pm**

**Orlando World Center Marriott**

**Crystal Ballroom, Salon G1**

**See you there!**

**Association for Institutional Research**

**53rd Annual Forum, New Orleans, Louisiana**

**June 2–6, 2012**

**Enrollment Intensity and Programs of Study in  
Community Colleges**

Date & Time TBA

Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, Room TBA

*Session Participants:*

Sung-Woo Cho, Research Associate, CCRC  
Peter Crosta, Database Manager and Research Analyst,  
CCRC

**Society for the  
Scientific Study of Reading**

**19th Annual Conference, Montreal, Quebec**

**July 11–14, 2012**

**Writing Skills of Low-Achieving Postsecondary  
Students**

Date & Time TBA

Location TBA

*Session Participant:*

Dolores Perin, Senior Research Associate, CCRC



## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### REPORTS AND PAPERS

#### Do High-Stakes Placement Exams Predict College Success?

Judith Scott-Clayton. *Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 41, February 2012.*

This paper analyzes one of the most commonly used placement exams, using data on over 42,000 first-time entrants to a large, urban community college system. Using both traditional correlation coefficients and decision-theoretic measures of placement accuracy and error rates, the author finds that placement exams are more predictive of success in math than in English, and more predictive of who is likely to do well in college-level coursework than of who is likely to fail.

#### Student Success Courses and Educational Outcomes at Virginia Community Colleges

Sung-Woo Cho and Melinda Mechur Karp. *Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 40, February 2012.*

Using data from the Virginia Community College System and building upon a prior study, this paper examines whether student success course enrollment as well as student and institutional characteristics have positive associations with shorter term student outcomes such as credit accumulation within the first year and persistence into the second year. The authors find that students who were referred to developmental education were more likely to earn any college-level credits within the first year if they enrolled in a student success course in their first term.

#### Employer Perceptions of Associate Degrees in Local Labor Markets: A Case Study of the Employment of Information Technology Technicians in Detroit and Seattle

Michelle Van Noy and James Jacobs, *CCRC Working Paper No. 39, February 2012.*

Based on fieldwork in two distinct labor markets, this paper compares how associate and bachelor's degrees are perceived by employers seeking to hire IT technicians. The study finds that there are particular positive and negative qualities, such as hands-on skills and lack of academic initiative, that hiring managers expect to find almost exclusively among associate degree holders. The findings also suggest that perceptions of credentials vary by local labor market characteristics.

#### What Explains Trends in Labor Supply Among U.S. Undergraduates, 1970–2009?

Judith Scott-Clayton. *National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 17744, January 2012.*

This paper examines working patterns among traditional-age college students from 1970–2009. Hours worked by full-time undergraduates increased until 2000, then remained stable until they dropped abruptly in 2009. This paper considers several explanations for the long-term trend of rising employment—including compositional change and rising tuition costs—and considers whether the upward trend is likely to resume when economic conditions improve.

#### Get With the Program: Accelerating Community College Students' Entry into and Completion of Programs of Study

Davis Jenkins and Sung-Woo Cho. *Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 32, January 2012.*

This paper argues that to improve completion rates on a substantial scale, community colleges must ensure that new students enter a coherent college-level program of study as soon as possible. It presents a simple method for measuring program entry and completion rates using data on students' actual course-taking behaviors rather than declared major or intent. The paper offers research-based suggestions for ways community colleges can rethink their practices at key stages of the student experience to accelerate program entry and completion.

#### A Contextualized Intervention for Community College Developmental Reading and Writing Students

Dolores Perin, Rachel Hare Bork, Stephen T. Peverly, Linda H. Mason, and Megan Vaselewski. *Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 38, January 2012.*

This paper provides evidence on the potential efficacy of an approach to helping students develop an important academic skill, written summarization. In two experiments, a contextualized intervention was administered to developmental reading and writing students in two community colleges. The intervention was a 10-week curricular supplement that emphasized written summarization, as well as vocabulary knowledge, question generation, reading comprehension, and persuasive writing. The findings of this study suggest that the intervention had utility for academically underprepared postsecondary students.

### **The Impacts of State Performance Funding Systems on Higher Education Institutions: Research Literature Review and Policy Recommendations**

*Kevin J. Dougherty and Vikash Reddy. Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 37, December 2011.*

Policymakers have been seeking new ways to secure improved performance from higher education institutions. One popular approach has been performance funding, which involves use of a formula to tie funding to institutional performance on specified indicators. This report reviews findings from studies on performance funding programs in a multitude of states. It discusses differences among programs, effects on colleges and on student outcomes, obstacles to effective functioning, and unintended impacts. The report provides recommendations for addressing identified problems.

### **High School Dual Enrollment Programs: Are We Fast-Tracking Students Too Fast?**

*Cecilia Speroni. National Center for Postsecondary Research, NCPR Working Paper, December 2011.*

Despite the popularity of dual enrollment (DE) as a strategy for preparing high school students for college, little rigorous evidence exists on its effectiveness. This NCPR paper uses a regression discontinuity design to gauge the causal effect of DE on rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion among students who are on the margin of eligibility for DE participation. While DE courses in general are found to have no significant effects, participation in a DE algebra course is found to have significant positive effects on rates of college enrollment and completion.

### **Determinants of Students' Success: The Role of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Programs**

*Cecilia Speroni. National Center for Postsecondary Research, NCPR Working Paper, November 2011.*

Using data from two cohorts of all high school students in Florida, this NCPR study examines the relative power of Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment (DE) in predicting students' college access and success. Both AP and DE were strongly associated with positive outcomes but differed in their association with enrollment outcomes. DE students were more likely than AP students to go to college after high school but less likely to first enroll in a four-year college. However, the difference in bachelor's degree attainment between the two groups is much smaller and not statistically significant for some model specifications. In addition, the effect of DE is driven by courses taken at the local community college campus; there is no effect for DE courses taken at the high school.

### **The Opposing Forces that Shape Developmental Education: Assessment, Placement, and Progression at CUNY Community Colleges**

*Shanna Smith Jaggars and Michelle Hodara. Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 36, November 2011.*

Based on a case study of CUNY's six community colleges, this paper identifies three sets of opposing forces that shape developmental policy and practice: system-wide consistency versus institutional autonomy, efficient versus effective assessment, and promotion of student progression versus enforcement of academic standards. It describes how each of these three tensions shape developmental policies, practices, and student progression patterns. The authors also provide suggestions on how colleges can bring these forces into alignment to create a system that better meets stakeholders' goals.

### **The Content of Their Coursework: Understanding Course-Taking Patterns at Community Colleges by Clustering Student Transcripts**

*Matthew Zeidenberg and Marc Scott. Community College Research Center, CCRC Working Paper No. 35, October 2011.*

This paper applies a clustering algorithm to the transcripts of a cohort of first-time students in the Washington State system in order to determine what programs of study they appear to be pursuing. The findings indicate that clustering may be a useful method for faculty, administrators, and researchers who seek to understand student course-taking patterns.

### **Different Approaches to Dual Enrollment: Understanding Program Features and Their Implications**

*Linsey Edwards, Katherine L. Hughes, and Alan Weisberg. The James Irvine Foundation, October 2011.*

This report discusses eight secondary-postsecondary partnerships in California that sought to integrate dual enrollment with a complementary career-focused strategy for engaging struggling students.

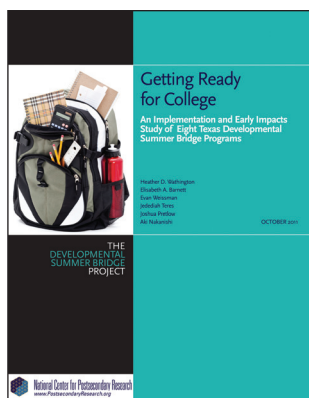
The programs featured here join a growing movement to make career-focused dual enrollment part of a promising college and career preparation strategy for a broad range of students.



## Getting Ready for College: An Implementation and Early Impacts Study of Eight Texas Developmental Summer Bridge Programs

Heather D. Wathington, Elisabeth A. Barnett, Evan Weissman, Jedediah Teres, Joshua Pretlow, and Aki Nakanishi, with Matthew Zeidenberg, Madeline Joy Weiss, Alison Black, Claire Mitchell, and John Wachen. *National Center for Postsecondary Research*, October 2011.

Developmental summer bridge programs — typically held in the summer between high school graduation and fall matriculation in college — involve intensive remedial instruction in math, reading, and/or writing and college preparation content for students entering college with low basic skills. This NCPR report presents the early findings of an evaluation of eight developmental summer bridge programs in Texas (seven at community colleges and one at an open-admissions four-year university). While program participation did not appear to increase college enrollment, there is evidence that program students were more likely to pass college-level courses in math and writing.



## Charting Pathways to Completion for Low-Income Community College Students

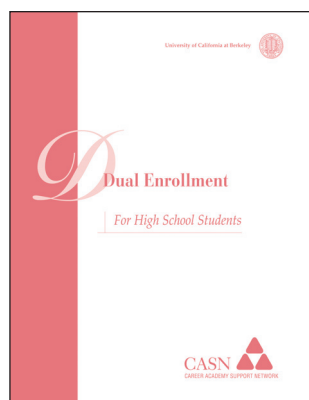
Davis Jenkins and Madeline Joy Weiss. *Community College Research Center*, CCRC Working Paper No. 34, September 2011.

This paper uses administrative data from Washington State to chart the educational pathways of first-time community college students over seven years, with a focus on young, socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The authors make recommendations for practitioners and policymakers.

## Dual Enrollment for High School Students

Linsey Edwards and Katherine L. Hughes. *Community College Research Center and Career Academy Network*, June 2011.

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to enroll in college courses and potentially earn college credit. This how-to guide provides information for practi-



tioners, schools, and districts on how to incorporate college coursework into high school academies and pathways.

## Institutional Variation in Credential Completion: Evidence from Washington State Community and Technical Colleges

Judith Scott-Clayton and Madeline Joy Weiss. *Community College Research Center*, CCRC Working Paper No. 33, April 2011.

This paper uses administrative data from Washington State to compare the outcomes of young, career-technical students across both technical colleges and comprehensive community colleges. Three key findings are discussed: first, technical and comprehensive colleges tend to serve quite different populations; second, technical schools have significantly higher certificate completion rates after three years with no apparent deficit in associate degree completion; and third, the differences in student outcomes within the two types of schools are much larger than the differences between them.

## Performance Incentives to Improve Community College Completion: Learning from Washington State's Student Achievement Initiative

Nancy Shulock and Davis Jenkins. *Community College Research Center and Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy*, March 2011.

In 2007, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges launched the Student Achievement Initiative (SAI), a system-wide policy to reward colleges for improvements in student achievement. This policy brief examines key issues raised by Washington State's experience to date with the SAI in order to inform the conversation currently occurring in many states on how to use state policy levers to meet ambitious state and national goals for increased college completion.



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